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AVENGERS

THE CROSSING

TIMESLIDE

STILL $1.50

THE DEATH OF AN AVENGER

BY KAVANAGH DEODATO

IT'S ALL BUT OVER NOW.

THIS BOY, THEIR HOPE FOR TODAY--AND ALL THE TOMORROWS YET TO COME--LIES DYING AT THEIR FEET.

FORSAKING ALL HE KNEW AND LOVED, YOUNG TONY STARK MADE AN IMPOSSIBLE JOURNEY TO THIS PLACE--TO THIS TIME--TO FACE HIS FUTURE...

...AND HIS VERY LIFE NOW HANGS IN THE BALANCE.

BY RANDAK...

...HIS PULSE IS ERRATIC, ALMOST NON-EXISTENT ALREADY.

I'M LOWERING HIS INTERNAL TEMPERATURE AS RAPIDLY AS POSSIBLE--EFFECTIVELY INDUCING A STATE OF *SUSPENDED ANIMATION*, SLOWING HIS BODILY FUNCTIONS TO A NEAR STANDSTILL--BUT...

...THE *DAMAGE* TO HIS CHEST LOOKS BEYOND REPAIR.

ONE SIDE, CRYSTAL.

IF I CAN MERGE MY INTANGIBLE FORM WITH HIS OWN, AND SELECTIVELY SOLIDIFY THE NECESSARY ORGANS AND ARTERIES FROM WITHIN...

...MY HEART CAN SERVE AS HIS.

WHILE THE SYNTHEZOID **VISION** AND THE INHUMAN CALLED **CRYSTAL** DO WHAT THEY CAN FOR WHAT'S LEFT OF THE BRAVE TEEN...

...THE REMAINING AVENGERS DO EVERYTHING IN THEIR POWER TO INSURE THAT HIS SACRIFICE WAS NOT IN VAIN.

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SHRRK

THE WASP--NOW AND FOREVER, IN ALL PROBABILITY--BETRAYED BY ONE SHE TRUSTED WITHOUT QUESTION, WITHOUT HESITATION.

AND THEIR POWER IS CONSIDERABLE.

HER ERSTWHILE HUSBAND, HANK PYM--A.K.A. GIANT MAN--AND NATASHA ROMANOV, CODE-NAMED BLACK WIDOW.

CHOOT

CHOOT

THE SUPER-SOLDIER KNOWN AS CAPTAIN AMERICA, ONLY RECENTLY RETURNED TO THEIR RANKS.

POOM

ZTTZ

THE ENIGMATIC ALIEN--CENTURY--AND THE EQUALLY MYSTERIOUS MASQUE.

AND CLINT BARTON, THE BATTLING BOWMAN CALLED HAWKEYE.

STARK

CHK

EVEN AS THE ARCTIC BUNKER THAT IS THEIR WARGROUND BEGINS--CONTRARY TO ALL THE LAWS OF PHYSICS--TO FOLD IN ON ITSELF...

POOM

...THE DEMI-GOD HERCULES TAKES OUT HIS RAGE AND PAIN ON THE MINIONS OF THEIR ENEMY.

CHK

CHK

STARK

CHK

STILL UNAWARE OF THE STRANGE CHANGES WITHOUT...

POOM

POOM

...FLEET-FOOTED PIETRO MAXIMOFF--THE MUTANT QUICKSILVER--

--ALSO TEARS THROUGH THE ANACHRONAUTS WITHIN.

CHK

CHK

BUT WHEN ALL IS SAID AND DONE...

...THE HOUSE OF KANG STANDS TALL AND PROUD.

"TIME'S END"

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TOO PROUD, SOME SAY.

I'M SORRY IT HAD TO COME TO THIS, MANTIS, BUT--

THE MATRIARCH OF THIS TEMPORAL DYNASTY--MANTIS--ALSO SERVES AS THEIR FINEST WARRIOR. A MARTIAL ARTIST UNMATCHED IN HER TIME...

...OR ANY OTHER, BEFORE OR SINCE.

YOUR APOLOGIES ARE UNNECESSARY, CAPTAIN.

AND INSULTING.

THIS ONE WILL *NOT* BE TOUCHED BY YOU OR *ANY* OF YOUR CURSED ILK...

...EVER AGAIN.

THE AVENGERS SOWED THE *SEEDS* OF YOUR OWN DESTRUCTION LONG AGO. WHAT FOLLOWS NOW IS ON *YOUR* HEADS, YOUR CONSCIENCE.

OUR PAST TOGETHER PROVED NOTHING BUT A PRELUDE TO THE END OF ALL THERE IS, WAS, OR *EVER* WILL BE.

MY NEW FAMILY IS THE *LAST* CHANCE FOR EACH AND EVERY ONE OF US.

*ALTHOUGH NOT THE NAMES THEY WERE BORN TO, **TOBIAS** AND **MALACHI** ARE THE ONLY NAMES THEY KNOW.*

CHOOT CHOOT CHOOT

CHOOT

CHOOT

*FOR THEY WERE **STOLEN** FROM THEIR TRUE PARENTS--THEIR RIGHTFUL PLACE IN HISTORY--IN THEIR EARLIEST DAYS, WRONGFULLY RECHRISTENED AS HEIRS TO THE THRONE OF MANTIS...*

JUST A FEW MOMENTS MORE, MY SONS...

TEK

TEK TEK

...AND KANG THE CONQUEROR.

ONCE THE UNDISPUTED LORD OF PAST, PRESENT, AND FUTURE.

BUT TIME IS NO LONGER ON HIS SIDE.

CHK

CHK

CHK

...AND THE AVENGERS WILL POSE NO THREAT TO ANY OF US.

MY *TEMPORAL TRANSPOSER* IS FINALLY PRIMED FOR ACTIVATION.

DON'T LIKE THE SOUND OF THAT AT ALL, HAWK.

TAKE 'IM DOWN!

POOM

ON IT, HIGH-POCKETS...

...BUT HIS BLASTED FORCE-SHIELD'S STILL *SOLID* AS A ROCK.

FAR *MORE* SO, IN FACT.

AS EVER, HEROES, YOU *UNDER-ESTIMATE* ME...

...BUT IT MATTERS LITTLE NOW.

MY TRANSPOSER IS DESIGNED TO SHUNT US *OUT* OF TIME, EFFECTIVELY ESCAPING THE REACH OF THE *ONE WHO COMES* UNTIL I AM FULLY PREPARED FOR OUR FINAL CONFRON-TATION.

THIS BEACHHEAD *EARTH* WILL BE REDUCED TO A *BREEDING GROUND* FOR THOSE FIT TO SERVE IN MY ANACHRONAUT ARMY...

...AND A *BONEYARD* FOR THE REST OF YOU.

WITH THE SIMPLE TURN OF A KNOB...

...THE *END* BEGINS.

TAG, TOBIAS--

POOM

uhnn...

YOU'RE IT!

TZZT

AARGH!

ZTTZ

AWAY FROM MY BROTHER, AVENGERS!

CHOOT

THIS ONE *SWEARS* TO YOU, CAPTAIN, IF THE BOY IS HURT--OR WORSE--

--YOUR DEATH WILL BE MOST *PAINFUL*, INDEED.

A WORLD WITHIN...

WHO AM I?

YOU ARE ANTHONY STARK.

A YOUNG AND INNOCENT MAN WHO RISKED ALL TO HELP US DEFEAT HIS OLDER, CORRUPTED SELF.

AND YOU SUCCEEDED.

AT GREAT COST.

BUT THE AVENGERS WILL NOT ALLOW YOU TO DIE FOR SINS THAT ARE NOT YET YOURS.

FOLLOWING DOCTOR PYM'S INSTRUCTIONS, WE HAVE SUCCESSFULLY STABILIZED YOUR CONDITION. BUT IT IS A TEMPORARY MEASURE AT BEST...

...YOUR ULTIMATE FATE HAS YET TO BE DETERMINED.

I KNOW ALL THAT.

I REMEMBER IT, SENSE IT, ALL TOO WELL.

WHAT I DON'T UNDERSTAND IS, WHO AM I...

...THAT COULD COMMIT THE TERRIBLE, TERRIBLE ACTS TONY STARK IS RESPONSIBLE FOR?!

THE WORLD WITHOUT...

KANG AND MANTIS DID THIS TO ME.

TELEPORTED ME OUT OF THAT HELLHOLE BEFORE THE AVENGERS COULD--

THAT SOUND?!

ANOTHER SCREAM...

NO.

JUST THE HOWL OF THE WIND.

OR AN ECHO OF CONSCIENCE...

...THROUGH ALL THAT REMAINS OF A HOLLOW HEART.

SO MUCH BLOOD ON MY HANDS, STAINING MY SOUL.

I CAN'T RUN FROM IT ANY-MORE.

THAT CITADEL IS THE SOURCE OF MY DAMNATION...

...AND MY ONLY HOPE FOR SALVATION.

NONE ARE PERMITTED IN THE SECTOR WITHOUT AUTHORIZATION, MAN OF IRON.

UNDER PENALTY OF DEA--

CHOOT

CHOOT

--urkk!

COTATI...

KROOM

...WE'RE GOING TO FINISH THIS ONCE AND FOR ALL.

FAR TOO CLOSE FOR COMFORT...

akk...

ONE OF YOURS CHOSE ANOTHER OVER THIS ONE, *DROVE* THIS ONE TO A LOVELESS UNION WITH A MAN THAT WAS NOT A MAN...

...*SPAWNING* A MONSTER IN THE FORM OF A MESSIAH.

AND IF HE CANNOT BE PUNISHED FOR IT, AVENGER, *YOU* SURELY WILL BE.

THIS ONE WILL *SNAP* YOUR SPINE...

...AS EASILY AS THE AND-ROID BROKE MY *HEART*.

IF IT IS ME YOU WANT, MANTIS...

...THEN IT IS I YOU SHALL HAVE.

EYAAR--!

YES, VISION, *OH*, YES...

...THIS ONE SHALL ENJOY THAT VERY, *VERY* MUCH.

IMPRESSIVE, SPEEDSTER.

BUT THE POWER OF YOUR PUNCHES...

WHMP

UHFF

...IS ALL IN THE MOMEN-TUM.

BACK OFF, MALACHI--

--NOW--

--NO MORE AVENGERS WILL FALL TODAY!

TZZT

THIS SHALL NOT CONTINUE, KANG.

POOM

IT MUST NOT!

YOU AND YOURS BEAR BLAME FOR SUFFERING ENOW!

FAR MORE THAN YOU COULD KNOW, GODLING, THAN YOU COULD EVER BEGIN TO SUSPECT.

WHY, MANTIS?

THOK

YOU WERE AN ALLY ONCE, A FRIEND. WE TOOK YOU IN, CARED FOR YOU AS ONE OF OUR OWN UNTIL--

UNTIL YOU BETRAYED THIS ONE FOR ANOTHER.

FOR WHAT YOU DID TO THIS ONE, VISION--FOR THE ANGUISH YOU WROUGHT--

THAK

THOK

--WE WOUNDED YOU THROUGH ONE YOU TRULY DO CARE ABOUT...

...AND THROUGH OTHERS YOU HAVE YET TO EVEN RECOGNIZE.

KWOK

AND FOR WHAT *YOU* DID TO IRON MAN, DEVILS--

--FORCED *HIM* TO DO TO JAN AND THE OTHERS--

FZAAT

STARK WAS HARDLY MY *FIRST* CHOICE, AVENGERS.

YOU *WILL* PAY!

THE *BRILLIANT* MIND I SOUGHT, YES. YET TOO *UNSTABLE*, I SUSPECTED, RIFE WITH TOO MANY INNATE WEAKNESSES OF HIS OWN.

BUT PYM FOUGHT SO HARD AGAINST MY INFLUENCE, MY SUBTLE MANIPULATIONS. NEVER *YIELDING* TO MY SWAY...

...CHOOSING INSTEAD TO BREAK *WITHOUT* BENDING.

KROOM

MY BREAK-DOWNS!

YOU WERE RESPONSIBLE FOR MY NERVOUS BR--

FINALLY, YOU GRASP THE *TRUTH*.

YEEAR!

YOU SEE THE *FULL SCOPE* OF MY MACHINATIONS--

--TO *DESTROY* YOU ALL FROM *WITHIN*!

uhnn...

--THE TIMELESS BEAUTY OF MY *CONSUMMATE* PLAN--

POOM

TOOM

RELEASE THEM, BASE COWARD!

IF YOU CARE TO SAY ANY *PRAYERS*, MORTALS--

ZRAAK

SAY 'EM FOR KANG!

IMPOSSIBLE!

IT CAN'T BE...

...IRON MAN AND THE COTATI SWORDSMAN?!

TOGETHER?

LAUGHABLE INDEED, STARK.

IT'S FAR TOO LATE FOR YOU TO CHANGE COLORS ONCE AGAIN, TURNCOAT...

...SO WHAT ARE YOU PLAYING AT NOW?

THIS IS NO GAME, CONQUEROR.

HEAR ME, CHAMPIONS.

YOUR PEOPLE AND MINE HAVE LOST MUCH ALREADY TO THE TIME-LORD'S FATAL FEARS...

...AND HIS CONSORT'S INSATIABLE THIRST FOR VENGEANCE.

BUT MANTIS WAS YOUR TEAMMATE ONCE-- AND MY BELOVED-- CHERISHED BY US ALL...

SHOOM

STAY OUT OF IT, KANG!

OR WHAT, TRAITOR?

...AND MY ONCE-BRIDE CAN BE OUR REDEMPTION, IF WE CAN BE HERS.

WE NEED ONLY FOCUS ON THE MANTIS WE ONCE KNEW-- AND LOVED LIKE NO OTHER--

--SHARING OUR STRENGTH AND COURAGE.

UNITED AS ONE.

PLEASE...

SHRRFK

NOOO!

NEVER, GREENLING...

SHRRFK

...THIS ONE WILL NOT ENDURE YOUR FOUL VIOLATION EVER AGAIN!

urrr...

SHMMM

"YOUR DEFILEMENT HAS COST THIS ONE TOO MUCH, ALREADY.

"AND IF THE TEMPORAL TRANSPOSER FAILS TO RELEASE US FROM THE CURRENTS OF THE TIMESTREAM--BEFORE HIS IMMINENT ADVENT--

-- ALL WILL SUFFER FOR THE SINS OF YOUR SEED.

NO FEAR, WOMAN.

THE CYCLE IS ALL BUT *COMPLETE.*

YOU *HEARD* THE MADMAN, TEAM...

...TIME FOR A SERIOUS *CHANGE* IN STRATEGY.

TAKE YOUR BEST SHOT, AVENGERS--

--DO YOUR VERY *WORST*--

TZZT

SHOOM

FZZT

ZTTZ

--MY TRANSPOSER FEEDS ON POWER, ENERGIZED BY YOUR FUTILE ASSAULT.

THE PROCESS NOW RUSHES TO ITS GRAND FINALE.

NOTHING, NOT A SCRATCH.

LET *ME* AT IT, CLINT.

GET REAL, STARK.

WHY SHOULD WE TRUST YOU?

YOU DON'T UNDERSTAND, ANY OF YOU...

...I DESIGNED THIS THING--BUILT IT MYSELF!

I CAN *DESTROY* IT.

PLEASE, AVENGERS--HANK--

--I HAVE TO TRY. IT'S *OUR ONLY* CHANCE.

MY ONLY CHANCE...

TONY...

LET HIM GO, CAP.

THERE'S SOMETHING IN HIS EYES...

...SOMETHING I HAVEN'T SEEN IN A LONG/ LONG TIME.

ONLY WAY TO *STOP* THE TRANSPOSER...

...REFLECT ITS OWN ENERGY...

...SHUNT IT SACK TO HEL--

KRAKA BOOM

YAAAAR!

FOOLS BEYOND MEASURE!

YOU CANNOT BEGIN TO FATHOM WHAT YOU HAVE DONE!

NOWHERE HERE-- IN THIS REALITY ENTIRE-- IS SAFE ANY LONGER!

NONE OF US WILL EVER BE SAFE AGAIN!

THIS PLACE--THIS TIME...

...ALL USELESS TO ME NOW.

THE CITADEL'S FADING OUT WITH KANG AND MANTIS.

WE'RE BACK IN THE TEMPLE OF AGAPHAUR!

BUT, TONY...

SO SORRY...

...FOR WHAT I DID TO MARILLA... TO AMANDA...

TO ALL OF YOU...

SORRY FOR EVERYTHING...

TEK

MAYBE SOMEHOW...

...SAVE THE BOY AT LEAST--

SOME KIND OF SCHEMATICS DIAGRAM...

...FOR IRON MAN'S CHEST-PLATE.

IT'S ALL OVER, AVENGERS.

HE'S GONE.

BUT IN THE VERY END, MY FRIEND, HE DID COME BACK TO YOU ONCE MORE.

ANTHONY STARK DIED AS HE ALWAYS TRIED TO LIVE...

...JUST AS MARILLA KNEW, JUST AS LUNA KNOWS.

YOU HAVE *CHANGED* THE FUTURE, ALL OF YOU TOGETHER.

AND IT IS THE *NATURE* OF THINGS TO CHANGE.

I THINK YOU *ALREADY* KNOW, DEAR CRYSTAL...

BUT *WHO* ARE YOU, REALLY? WHY DO YOU CARE?

MAMA!

...MY SWEET BABY GIRL!

THANK YOU, BOY-- FOR PROTECTING MY DAUGHTER, FOR RETURNING HER UNHARMED--

BUT YOU HAVE NO IDEA WHAT IS YET TO COME...

VRRRM

LOOK TO THE SKIES, MY FELLOWS...

...A FORCE WORKS HEX-SHIP ARRIVES.

PILOTED BY--

...A HERO IN HIS HEART.

TUC--?!

AND LUNA...

" ..THE *SCARLET WITCH!* "

FINALLY! AVENGERS.

I HAD TO TRACK YOUR COMM-SIGNALS ALL THE WAY FROM THE ARCTIC BUNKER TO HERE IN VIETNAM.

WE HAVE *MUCH* TO DISCUSS...

NEXT! *NEW BEGINNINGS...!*

ZONE